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Commission on Sustainable Development acting as the preparatory committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development
Third session
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Agenda item 2
Consideration of the Chairman's paper transmitted from the second session of the Commission acting as the preparatory committee, together with other relevant inputs to the preparatory process

Letter dated 3 April 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the final conclusions of the Meeting of Women Leaders on the Environment, which was held in Helsinki on 7 and 8 March 2002 (see annex I). The list of participants is also attached (see annex II).

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development acting as the preparatory committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

(*Signed*) Marjatta **Rasi**
Ambassador

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Annex I to the letter dated 3 April 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Meeting of Women Leaders on the Environment
7-8 March 2002, Helsinki, Finland

1. Women ministers of the environment and representatives from 19 countries, as well as women leaders of 28 international governmental and non-governmental organisations working for sustainable development met in Helsinki on 7-8 March, 2002. The meeting of Women Leaders on the Environment was organised under the auspices of the Council of Women World Leaders (CWWL) and IUCN - The World Conservation Union, and hosted by the Ministry of the Environment of Finland. The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Satu Hassi, Minister of the Environment and of Development Cooperation, Finland, and Ms. Rejoice T. Mabudafhasi, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, South Africa.

2. The meeting recognised that ten years ago, governments committed themselves to the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, and while much work has begun, the full hope and promise of the integration of social, economic and environmental policies have yet to be wholly realised. Women bring a unique voice to the challenges and opportunities of sustainable development. Their experience, their participation and their leadership are crucial to the success of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Johannesburg offers an opportunity to strengthen the world's commitment to a sustainable development that is fair and equitable for all, and to reaffirm countries' common but differentiated responsibilities towards that end.

3. The elimination of global poverty and the promotion of sustainable development are essential to a fair and equitable world. The current patterns of consumption and production are among the major causes of the degradation of the Earth's resources. If the present trends in poverty growth, population expansion and the production and consumption patterns continue, the negative impacts on natural resources, environment and health will only grow worse. And women, who represent a majority of the world's poor, will continue to suffer disproportionately.

4. Among the greatest environmental challenges the world faces are the climate change, the lack of access to water and to renewable energy, and the ongoing degradation of natural resources. Improvements in these areas are essential to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

5. Creation of international and national environment which is conducive to sustainable development is important for the realisation of gender equality and the elimination of poverty and hunger. We must devise approaches that make it possible to secure for all the benefits of globalisation, of economic

growth and a healthy, sustainable environment while recognising and preserving the strength of indigenous and local communities.

6. Meeting these challenges requires the full participation of and partnership between all. It requires equitable access to information and transparency in the decision-making processes as well as action to prevent negative gender specific impacts. We need to continue the development of measurable indicators to follow the progress.

7. Promotion of dialogue and understanding among cultures and civilisations is important, and we stress the key role that women play in preventing conflict and maintaining peace as a prerequisite for sustainable development.

8. We commit ourselves to the values, principles and targets of the United Nations Millennium Declaration especially with regard to globalisation, the eradication of poverty, the protection of the environment and the promotion of gender equality. We work towards reaching these commitments and form a network of women environment ministers to that end.

To ensure sustainability of economic activities, we must urge governments to:

9. Promote policy co-ordination, coherence and cooperation among the economic, environmental and social institutions at the local, national, regional and global levels and enhance women's full and equal participation in environmental, social and economic decision-making, including trade and investment policies;

10. Ensure that fiscal, trade and investment policies do not have adverse effects on the livelihoods, health and food security of the poor, especially women and children; and utilise gender-sensitive sustainability assessments of these policies;

11. Enhance the use of economic instruments, market incentives and policies to internalise external environmental costs and benefits, in particular to ensure equitable payment for ecological services; identify and reduce, with the aim of phasing out, subsidies which are environmentally harmful;

12. Increase the flow of official development assistance and create an enabling environment to increase the flow of foreign direct investments to developing countries, and urge governments and business to take into account not only the economic and financial but also the development, social, gender and environmental implications of their undertaking;

13. Provide financial, technological, technical and capacity-building support, in particular for women;

14. Provide incentives for cleaner and more energy- and resource-efficient production methods; and promote corporate social and environmental responsibility and accountability;

15. Monitor closely how privatisation of environmental goods and services affect women and local communities.

To enhance public information and consumer awareness, we must:

16. Ensure that the principal consumer rights, such as access to essential goods, health and safety, information and education, are attainable especially by women, who make the daily choices in fulfilling the needs of their families; raise public awareness on the role of women in sustainable production and consumption patterns;

17. Provide consumers with information on the environmental impacts, including greenhouse gas emissions, of processes and products, and promote public disclosure of environmental data and impacts;

18. Develop appropriate regulations and product standards to ensure the health and safety of consumers; enhance a more effective involvement of the developing countries in the international standard setting organisations;

19. Support women's consumer initiatives by promoting recycling facilities, organic food marketing, product information and labelling, including labelling of toxic chemicals and pesticides in a language and symbols that are understood by consumers, regardless of age and level of literacy;

To promote equitable sharing of benefits from genetic resources, we must:

20. Establish and strengthen effective, transparent and predictable national and international frameworks related to the access to genetic resources and to the equitable sharing of benefits from their use, taking into account the protection of collective ownership, traditional knowledge and the practices of indigenous peoples and local communities;

21. Enhance the capacity of developing countries to strengthen their institutional and legislative structures regarding access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of benefits, and to deal with the opportunities and risks rising from genetically modified organisms; in order to minimise the risks, continue scientific research on these opportunities and risks;

22. Promote the establishment of true participatory mechanisms for the involvement of indigenous and local communities, especially women, in decision-making processes related to the protection and sustainable use of natural resources; expand participatory research programmes to explore and record women's indigenous knowledge and their specific ways of owning, using and maintaining diverse natural resources, and ensure that women hold ownership over that knowledge;

23. Ratify, implement and enforce existing international agreements, and enhance closer cooperation and co-ordination between international organisations working on issues concerning the protection of, the access to and the sharing of benefits from genetic resources;

24. Clarify the relations between the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other international conventions, *inter alia*, with regard to the appropriation and use of women's knowledge of and control over the natural resources.

To develop poverty eradication policies which empower and enable the poor to achieve sustainable livelihoods while protecting natural resources, we must:

25. Integrate the gender and environment perspectives into international instruments and national development strategies and programmes (e.g. PRSPs) aimed at promoting growth and reducing poverty;

26. Design and implement participatory policies to enable poor people, especially women, to have a voice in developing solutions for a more sustainable use of natural resources, and ensure adequate financial and technical resources for implementing programmes and projects oriented to enhance gender equity;

27. Support policies, awareness building and investments to reduce environmental and health risks due to lack of access to safe water and sanitation, and due to indoor and outdoor air pollution; give special attention to HIV/AIDS as a multisectoral development issue, particularly in Africa, and to curb HIV/AIDS make funds and medicines accessible to both women and men;

28. Ensure equal rights, access to and control by women and men over natural resources, including land tenure; provide technical and financial assistance to reduce vulnerability to environmental change and natural disasters, to support sustainable livelihoods, agriculture and fisheries, while ensuring food security and the nutritional status of people living in poverty, especially girls and women;

29. Support debt relief measures in the least developed countries and the efforts of these countries to enhance sustainable development including poverty reduction with funds released from debt relief according to the priorities deemed relevant in their circumstances.

30. Develop integrated approaches to improve equal access by women and men to shelter and basic services, and to combat unsustainable trends in urban development;

31. Promote policies to increase formal education, including vocational training, in order to reduce the gender gap.

To ensure that both women and men are able to participate fully in decision-making and the implementation of sustainable development, we must:

32. Integrate gender equity policies and procedural rules into the work for sustainable development; develop policies, legislation and strategies towards gender balance in environmental protection and in the distribution of its benefits; these can include the application of quotas and the genuine participation of women in planning, decision-making and assessment bodies, affirmative action programmes, awareness raising, evaluation of the gender balance in sustainable development institutions, and guidance of women towards careers as decision-makers in sustainable development.

33. Design and support programmes that contribute to capacity building for, and promote increased participation of, women in decision-making at all levels;

34. Encourage the media, corporate and international, to disseminate messages to promote gender equity and sustainable development;

35. Collect, develop and utilise at all levels sex-disaggregated data and gender-specific indicators, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and promote research on gender-specific experiences, roles and impacts of economic, social and environmental activities;

36. Include a gender perspective in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development on indicators; consider setting up a consistent and comparable reporting methodology within the UN system to follow-up the advancement of women in decision-making positions in sustainable development worldwide.

We pledge

37. We women, pledge for a world that honours the inherent strength in a cultural diversity and that includes love, equity, solidarity, responsibility, sharing and respect as common principles. We need an ethic that reaches for a better quality of life, rather than for accumulation of wealth.

38. We work for a partnership for peace and sustainable development, reconciliation of the powers of the mind, of science and technology with peace of the heart and the spirit of nature and creation.

Annex II to the letter dated 3 April 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Final list of participants of the Meeting of Women Leaders on the Environment, 7-8 March 2002, Helsinki, Finland

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Mrs. Dolores Arssenova
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Ministry of Environment and Water

Mrs. Violeta Roiatchka
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COLOMBIA

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CUBA

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Environmental Agency
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ECUADOR

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Ministerio del Ambiente

Mr. Luis Morales Guerra
Ministerio del Ambiente

EL SALVADOR

Mrs. Ana Maria Majano
Minister of Environment and Natural Resources

FINLAND

Mrs. Satu Hassi
Minister of the Environment
Ministry of the Environment

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Ms. Aira Kalela
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Mrs. Outi Berghäll
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Mrs. Taina Nikula
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Mrs. Sirpa Pietikäinen
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National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES)

GEORGIA

Mrs. Nino Chkhobadze
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Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources Protection

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Mrs. Margot Wallström
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